

Roe Stands Up for East Tennessee by Rejecting the National Energy Tax

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Congressman Phil Roe (TN-1) stood up for Tennesseans who will be disproportionately affected by the National Energy Tax Bill (H.R.2454), by casting a NO vote. Roe noted this is a bad bill for agriculture, rural communities and the economy as a whole.

H.R.2454 narrowly passed the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 219-212.

Roe gave the following statement on the House floor regarding cap-and-trade legislation:

I've only been here six months, but this is the worst piece of legislation that has come to the House floor yet. It defies logic that at a time of economic recession, we would impose a regressive national energy tax that many have predicted will result in a net job loss. Supporters of this legislation only want to talk about the so-called "green" jobs that will be created. They are conveniently ignoring that some studies indicate that for every one of these new jobs, two jobs are eliminated.

Worse, we are creating a costly confusing program of carbon credits. Let me make a prediction – the only certainty under this bill is Wall Street traders sophisticated enough to understand how these credits are traded will enrich themselves, while businesses that have to use the credits will lose money and have to shed jobs and, as the President stated, electricity rates will necessarily skyrocket.

Furthermore, western and northeastern states benefit to the detriment of the rest of the country. When you look at the states who are predicted to have the largest increase in their energy costs, let's put it this way: the bill's sponsors have taken care of themselves.

Now is the worst possible time for a job-killing piece of legislation. But it's even worse for companies like Eastman Chemical, based in my district, which competes on a global scale. Some companies can simply pass their increased costs along to consumers, but companies like Eastman, who compete against Chinese firms who sell similar chemicals, literally have to shed jobs to stay competitive with the international firms they compete against or, worse, move overseas.

I offered an amendment in the Rules Committee yesterday that would have at least brought a level playing field between the U.S., India and China. My feeling is if the Congress is going to pass this legislation, we should require India and China — two enormous and growing sources of greenhouse gas emissions — to also abide by the same standards. My amendment would have required the U.S. come to agreement with these two countries on emission reductions before implementing any provision within the bill.

Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the amendment was not made in order. The effect of not passing this amendment is that China and India will go on emitting as much as they like while our economy is shackled by these restrictions. Sure, supporters have delayed the bill's worst effects until the out-years, but the day of reckoning is clearly included in this bill.

If Democrats were truly interested in passing legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, they could have come together with Republicans and created a tax incentive program for businesses who reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. I think we've proven time and again that businesses who are incentivized to undertake certain behaviors do so, but businesses who are punished tend to shed jobs or shut their doors. If we defeat this bill, let's work together to come up with a common sense plan that reduces these emissions while growing, rather than shrinking, our economy. We can't afford to lose our manufacturing base.

This rule is a sham, but it pales in comparison to how awful this bill is. I urge all members to demand the return of a democratic process and defeat a bill that is certain to exacerbate our economic recession.